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# Sri Lankan Army on the Defensive

## *Efforts Frustrated to Curb Growing Tamil Insurgency in North*

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COLOMBO, Sri Lanka—Tamil guerrillas have seized control of much of the northern quarter of this Indian Ocean island nation, and officials here are beginning to concede that government security forces are barely able to move beyond their garrisons.

Sustaining an almost continuous hit-and-run offensive that began in November, the guerrillas have extended their attacks to the eastern provinces near the strategic port city of Trincomalee, straining Sri Lanka's 11,000-man Army almost to the breaking point.

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The Indian government repeatedly has denied allegations by the Sri Lankan government that it condones and even supports Tamil guerrilla training bases in southern India. It says that it merely has given refuge to approximately 40,000 Sri Lankan Tamils who have fled the fighting in the Northern Province. It is pressing the Sinhalese majority government of Sri Lankan President Junius R. Jayewardene for a political settlement to the Tamils' longstanding demands for autonomy and equitable representation.

The Sinhalese make up 74 percent of Sri Lanka's approximately 15 million people and the Tamils account for 13 percent. The rest are mostly Moslems and Christians.

Although separatist leaders in Madras claimed to have about 10,000 trained fighters either in Sri Lanka or moving constantly between Jaffna and southern India, Indian intelligence officials and western diplomatic sources say that the actual figure is closer to 2,000 and that many of them are not able to fight because of a shortage of arms.

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